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REMARKS OF TREASURY SECRETARY LLOYD BENTSEN
BENTSEN CURRENCY INTRODUCTION CEREMONY
FORT WORTH, TEXAS

Thank you, Pete. And good afternoon everyone. There are so many people here to thank and to recognize. First, allow me to introduce you to the lady who made this all possible. Yes, B.A.'s here, but she can't sign the currency. I want everyone to meet Mary Ellen Withrow, the 40th Treasurer of the United States. It's her signature you see on these bills along with mine.

Mayor Pro Tem Webber, Pete, Congressman Barton, Congressman Chapman, Congressman Frost, and our friend Jim Wright, the man most responsible for the fact that this plant is located here, providing jobs for Texans in Fort Worth. Jim, you're a great public servant.

Those of you who know me well know that I'm a patient man. Well, I took office, and I waited until we had a new Treasurer because these printing folks have to have both signatures before they issue new bills.

I waited. And I waited. And I waited -- 442 days. It's about time.

You know how much money they've printed with someone else's name on it since I took office? We're used to big in Texas, but these numbers are big, even here.

Since I became Treasury Secretary, we have printed nearly 11 billion notes here and at the plant in Washington. When you count up all the ones, fives, tens and all the rest, it adds up to about \$145 billion. If you laid it all end to end, it would be 387 round trips between the Dallas-Fort Worth area and Washington. Of course, the best part of one of those trips is coming back to Texas.

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You see some of the new bills up behind me blown up big so everyone can see. You'll notice that my signature's real legible. You might not realize it but years ago I had a signature that looked like chicken scratch. That was until I figured out that when you're in Congress, your name is on every envelope you mail out. I thought I really ought to let people know who I was, so I started writing a little neater.

It's great to be Treasury Secretary. There are some benefits to the job. I was able to get a sneak peek at the new currency. It may be great to be Secretary, but let me tell you, there's one perk I don't get -- I didn't get any free samples. Had to buy my own. Anyway, the first bills came up to my office, so B.A. and I opened up the package for a quick look. Everything looked great. But I thought they were going to put my picture on it. That was the deal, wasn't it?

That would do wonders for being recognized. They tell me that one of my predecessors had a problem identifying himself some years back. The story is that Mike Blumenthal was having dinner out of town and left his wallet behind. When it came time to pick up the bill, he had no credit cards, so he offered to write a check. Well, the waiter said that would be fine if he had some identification. His driver's license was back at the hotel, so he had to get one of his dinner companions to pull out a bill with his signature on it. The waiter took the check. It would work even better with a picture.

You know, we have that other printing plant up in Washington. It's a little older and not as fancy and modern as this plant, but they do good work. A reporter asked me why I was coming all the way to Fort Worth to have this ceremony. It would be so much easier just to pop down the street to the Washington plant. All the national media's there. We could make a big fuss of it.

It didn't take me long to answer that one. It's because I'm from Texas, and I wanted to share this with all of you. We've been through a great deal over the years.

I've been privileged to serve not just the people of Texas, but also all the people of the United States. And I'm proud that in the past 15 months we've been able to make a difference. We see unemployment down, and inflation under control. We hit the deficit reduction target, and we had that big win on NAFTA.

I want to invite everyone in a few minutes to come on a tour of this plant where Ray LeVant and his staff are doing such an excellent job. They've done some truly innovative things here. I can't wait to see the presses cranking out sheets of Bentsen bills.

Harry Truman used to have that sign on his desk that said "The Buck Stops Here." The saying here at Engraving and Printing is that "The Buck Starts Here." And as Secretary of the Treasury, and on behalf of Mrs. Withrow, our Treasurer, let me remind you -- no free samples.

Thank you all for joining us for this long overdue ceremony. Enjoy the tour.